

Houston, Texas

A public awareness program in Houston aims to reduce air pollution through public participation

Background: Like many urban areas across the country, the Houston-Galveston region of Texas suffers from poor air quality. The Environmental Protection Agency requires that these regions, known as nonattainment areas, take steps to reduce air pollution. In the past, these measures have focused on large industries, such as factories, and small businesses, such as dry cleaners. Houston expanded the focus of pollution reduction activities to include individuals, creating the Clean Air Action Program. Clean Air Action, developed in 1996 by the Regional Air Quality Planning Committee of the Houston-Galveston Area Council, consists of three separate but related activities: a comprehensive public education program that encourages the use of transit or ridesharing on high ozone-level days; a transit fare subsidy program on high ozone days to begin in August of 1997; and a marketing research element that evaluates the project and quantifies the emissions reductions from the program.

One of the main goals of the program is informing the public about days when ozone levels are predicted to be high, known as "ozone watch" days. The Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission provides the City of Houston with ozone watch advisories. The City in turn notifies the media and other groups through a fax network system. If an actual ozone exceedance occurs, an ozone warning is issued and individuals are encouraged to take steps to reduce air pollution, such as taking transit or carpooling, combining errands into one trip, or even postponing a trip until a day with improved air quality. In addition, a transit fare subsidy program will begin in 1997 and provide an economic incentive for individuals to use transit on ozone watch days.

Transportation Benefits: Mobile sources, such as cars and trucks, are one of the primary sources of volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxide - the precursors of ozone. Educating the public on the health and air quality benefits of carpooling, combining trips, and driving less will lead to a reduction in the emission of air pollutants. Having fewer cars on the road also reduces traffic congestion.

Community Benefits: Community benefits from the Clean Air Action program are wide-ranging. The public is educated on the effects on human health of poor air quality, informed of measures to reduce the emissions of pollution, and told when exposure to ozone may cause health problems - especially to the elderly and the young. As a result of the program, the public is equipped with the knowledge necessary to assist in reducing air pollution and traffic congestion.

ISTEA Funding Category: CMAQ

Project Costs

Total: \$3,750,000

ISTEA CMAQ Funds: \$3,000,000

Local Match: \$750,000

Contact:
Kathy Lang
Houston-Galveston Area Council
(713) 627-3200

Tamien Child Care Center

San Jose, California

**A CHILD CARE CENTER AT A BUSY RAIL AND BUS FACILITY ENCOURAGES
TRANSIT USE AND PROVIDES A CONVENIENT DAYCARE OPTION FOR COMMUTER WITH
CHILDREN**

BACKGROUND: The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority in the San Jose region of California utilized ISTEA CMAQ funds to construct a state-of-the-art child care facility at one of San Jose's major transportation hubs. The facility provides an important service to commuters with children, and increases the attractiveness of transit for parents who otherwise would have to make additional trips in order to get their children to child care programs.

Such trips to child care facilities typically occur during the morning and evening commutes, with maximum impacts on congestion, air quality, and energy consumption. The Tamien Child Care Center reduces the number of trips for commuting parents by providing a safe and convenient child care option. The center accommodates 147 children from ages 6 weeks through 12 years, offers before and after school programs, and full and part-time care. The 9,600 square foot facility is operated by Bright Horizons Children's Centers, Inc., a nationally known day care operator, under contract to the Transportation Authority.

TRANSPORTATION BENEFITS: Completed in November 1995, the Tamien Child Care Center is the first of its kind in its extensive relationship to transit. The facility is located at the Tamien CalTrain and Light Rail stations near Highway 87, and is served by 200 light rail trains, 204 buses, and 44 CalTrain commuter trains each weekday. The project is intended to demonstrate that offering child care and transit services at the same location will encourage parents to use public transportation instead of single occupant automobiles. In a typical case, a parent parks free at the station, drops the child off at the center, and rides light rail, CalTrain commuter rail, or a bus to their final destination. Special transit incentives are offered, including rail and bus discounts, priority enrollment and tuition discounts for children of all transit users, free commuter parking, emergency trip service, and transit

passes and on-site information. Studies estimate that the center could reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by more than 700,000 miles per year, with consequent vehicle emissions reductions.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS: The Tamien Child Care Center provides a direct benefit to area parents, who can ensure that their children receive quality day care, and reduce driving and commuting hassles associated with transporting their children to and from day care centers. Because the center's business hours are set with the commuter schedule in mind, schedule conflicts are less likely, as are income or productivity losses resulting from pick-ups and drop-offs that do not coordinate with the typical work day.

Working parents with children have typically not considered transit because of the need to drive their children to and from special day care facilities. With the Tamien Child Care Center, that obstacle is removed. The facility provides an innovative and effective public transportation incentive to working parents, satisfying a strong neighborhood demand for affordable, quality child care, and helping to reduce road congestion and improve regional air quality.

ISTEA FUNDING CATEGORY: CMAQ

PROJECT COSTS:

Total: \$2,350,000

ISTEA CMAQ Funds: \$1,600,000

Local Match: \$750,000

CONTACT:

James R. Lightbody

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
(408) 321-5744

Clean Buses for Boise - Boise, Idaho

A compressed natural gas bus takes to the
roads of Boise.

New Environmentally Sound Buses Improve Service and Air
Quality

BACKGROUND: The City of Boise, Idaho has used ISTEA funds to replace 28 of its outdated diesel buses with a fleet of clean small and medium-size buses powered by compressed natural gas (CNG). The buses were featured in an April 1995 parade which officially opened the annual Car Free Days of Spring promotion. The event, started by Mayor Brent Coles in 1992, encourages Boiseans to use alternative modes of transportation, including buses, bikes, carpools, vanpools, and walking. The new buses are smaller and more efficient than their predecessors, and are environmentally friendly, eliminating particulate matter emissions, and reducing carbon monoxide pollution by 90 percent. Most of the new buses seat 29 passengers, are wheelchair accessible, and feature electronic destination signs. The remaining buses seat 19 people, have a low-floor design, and are also wheelchair accessible.

The City and the local transit agency, Boise Urban Stages (THE BUS), also opened the city's first large-scale "fast fill" CNG fueling facility in October 1995. In partnership with the Intermountain Gas

Company, a service line for the facility - at a cost of \$76,000 - was provided free of charge to taxpayers. Mayor Coles remarked, "The transition of THE BUS fleet to CNG and the completion of [the fueling facility] is just another way the City of Boise is preserving our city's way of life and planning our future."

TRANSPORTATION BENEFITS: Boise's existing bus routes will be served by 20 of the new clean fuel buses, with the remaining 8 buses serving new routes. One of the new routes includes the extension of transit service to Boise State University, in a partnership that has increased bus ridership and increased mobility to the University and around the campus.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: The proactive role of the City of Boise is evident, not just in its role on the use of alternative fuels, but also in its progressive integration of the public in its transit decision making process. Residents attended CMAQ project selection hearings and provided valuable input in the project selection and prioritization process. The purchase of CNG buses grew out of public support for environmentally-friendly, clean fuel vehicles and the need for service improvements in the area. Such an approach has laid the groundwork for more public input into the transportation planning and investment process in the future.

ISTEA FUNDING CATEGORY: CMAQ

PROJECT COSTS

Total: \$5,912,000

ISTEA CMAQ Funds: \$3,085,000

Local Funds: \$2,827,000

CONTACT:

Debbie Ruggles
Boise Urban Stages
(208) 336-1019

Natural Gas Buses and Fueling Station - Cleveland, Ohio
The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is utilizing CMAQ funds from ISTEA to procure 60 new clean-burning compressed natural gas (CNG) buses and a new CNG fueling station. The new environmentally-friendly buses not only reduce bus emissions and improve regional air quality, but will replace the RTA's aging fleet thus improving transit service and quality. The new Harvard CNG Bus Garage houses one of the largest natural gas fueling facilities in the nation. The 200,000 square foot facility is capable of fueling 200 CNG or diesel buses in an 8-hour shift. It also includes a water reclamation system which recycles a significant amount of the water used daily to wash the buses.

ISTEA Funding Category: CMAQ

Contact:

Gerry Foster-Hollis

The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority

(216) 566-5100

